for raising the existing water level to the designed FRL of 152 feet apprehending the safety of the dam.

(d) It is proposed to convene a meeting of the Chief Ministers of Kerala and Tamil Nadu to resolve the issue.

Assistance for Rural Sanitation Programme

5735. SHRI KESHAB MAHANTA : Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government of Assam has sought central assistance under the Rural Sanitation Programme; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the amount provided so far for the said scheme ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI CHANDRADEO PRASAD VARMA) : (a) and (b) No, Sir. The Government of Assam has not sought central assistance under the Rural Sanitation Programme for the current year. However, State Government has an opening balance of Rs. 136.65 lakh as on 1.4.1997 as unutilised funds under the CRSP.

Illness Assistance Fund

5736. SHRI N.S.V. CHITTHAN : Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to finalise a New Health Policy to provide medical care to all;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of the progress made so far in the implementation of illness Assistance Fund Scheme, State-wise details ?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA): (a) and (b) The present Health Policy was adopted in 1983. An exercise has commenced which seeks to review past achievements and address current priorities in the health sector.

(c) National Illness Assistance Fund has been setup vide Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Resolution dated 13-1-1997, which has been published in the Gazette of India (Extra-ordinary) (Part-I Section-I) (No. 9). It has been provided in this scheme that every State/UT (with legislature) may set up an Illness Assistance Fund, as a registered society. This fund would release financial assistance to patients, below poverty line, living in India, Suffering from life threatening diseases for undergoing medical treatment at any of the superspeciality hospitals/ institutes or other Government/private hospitals, participating in the scheme. Some States have set up these illness assistance funds and during 96-97 grant-in-aid as admissible under the scheme has been released to the status of Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Tripura. Rs. 50.00 lakhs was sanctioned for the Delhi Arogya Nidhi. A provision of Rs. 25.00 crore has been made for grant-in-aid to State Illness Assistance Funds during 1997-98.

Arjun Tank

5737. SHRI AYYANNA PATRUDU :
SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN :

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether all Regiments of Indian Army are equipped with Sufficient 'Arjun Tanks'

(b) whether any inadequacy of 'Arjun Tanks' are experienced to cope with the need of Indian Army;

(c) whether there is any proposal to enhance the production of 'Arjun Tanks' for the use by Indian Army;

(d) whether there is any proposal to purchase new Tanks from any other country for the use of Indian Army; and

(e) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU) : (a) Two Regiments are proposed to be equipped with Arjun Tanks during the Ninth Plan.

(b) Pre-Production series of Tanks are undergoing User Trials.

(c) Matching numbers of Tanks are slated for production in the Ninth Plan.

(d) and (e) It will not be in the interests of national security to given any information at this stage.

National Highways in Maharashtra

5738. SHRI MADHUKAR SARPOTDAR : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that there are inadequate number of National Highways and their maintenance is poor in Maharashtra;